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Letter dated 19 October 2001 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the First Committee

The South African delegation, during the general debate of the First Committee, delivered a statement on behalf of the partner countries (Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden) of the New Agenda Initiative regarding the Ministerial Communiqué issued by the seven foreign ministers on 8 October 2001. As you will recall, my delegation requested that the Ministerial Communiqué be circulated as an official document of the First Committee of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session.

It would therefore be appreciated if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as an official document of the First Committee.

(*Signed*) Dumisani S. **Kumalo**

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Annex to the letter dated 19 October 2001 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the First Committee

Ministerial Communiqué issued by the Foreign Ministers of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden

The Foreign Ministers of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden have, in their preparation for the fifty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly , evaluated progress on nuclear disarmament and considered further measures to be taken in pursuit of their joint initiative to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.

They recalled the substantial outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). They noted with satisfaction the level of support given to the New Agenda resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 20 November 2000. They also recalled the constructive dialogue with the nuclear-weapon States that was started at the 2000 NPT Review Conference and agreed to continue this dialogue with a view to accelerating negotiations on all fronts, leading to nuclear disarmament.

The New Agenda Ministers were determined to pursue the complete implementation of the agreements reached at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. That outcome provides the requisite blueprint to achieve nuclear disarmament. Further progress on disarmament must be a major determinant in achieving and in sustaining international stability.

The Ministers made it clear that they remain deeply concerned at the continuing possibility that nuclear weapons could be used. They welcomed the indications of further cuts by the United States and Russian Federation to their nuclear arsenals. They noted that, despite past achievements in bilateral and unilateral reductions, the total number of nuclear weapons deployed and stockpiled still amounts to tens of thousands.

The Ministers also expressed their concern that the commitment to diminish the role of nuclear weapons in security policies and defence doctrines had not so far been pursued. This lack of progress is inconsistent with the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear - weapon States to achieve the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. And, in the context of disarmament it clearly represents a failure to grasp the opportunities of the post-cold war security environment.

The Ministers reaffirmed that any presumption of the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons by the nuclear-weapon States would be incompatible with the integrity and sustainability of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and with the broader goal of the maintenance of international peace and security.

The seven Ministers looked forward to the resumption in 2002 of the NPT review process where States would need to account for progress in achieving nuclear disarmament. Accountability will be assessed in the context of the reports that States parties have agreed to submit. To date, there have been few advances in the implementation of the

thirteen "steps" agreed to at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. A particular disappointment was the continuing failure of the Conference on Disarmament to deal with nuclear disarmament and to resume negotiations on fissile material. The expectations of progress that had come in 2000 have not yet been met.

The Ministers expressed concern at challenges to the non-proliferation regime. They urged the international community to redouble its efforts to achieve universal adherence to the NPT and not to take any steps that would undermine the determination of the international community to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. They repeated their call on those three States[1], which are not parties to the NPT and which operate unsafeguarded nuclear facilities, to accede to the Treaty as non-nuclear weapon States and to place their facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency agreements.

Ministers stressed that the participation of the international community as a whole is central to the maintenance and enhancement of international peace and stability. International security is a collective concern requiring collective engagement. They emphasised that unilateral and bilateral nuclear disarmament measures complement the treaty-based multilateral approach towards nuclear disarmament. They underlined also that internationally negotiated treaties in the field of disarmament have made a fundamental contribution to international peace and security. The importance of early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty remained crucial in this context.

Ministers emphasised the imperative of irreversibility in arms control. They expressed the view that international treaties in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation must be respected and that all obligations flowing from those treaties must be duly fulfilled.

Ministers stressed the importance of the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missiles (ABM) in the promotion and maintenance of international stability and as a basis for further reductions of strategic offensive weapons. Abrogation of the ABM Treaty could hold grave consequences for the future of global security. Further reductions of nuclear arsenals to lower limits must not be put at risk. They called upon all States to refrain from any action that could lead to a new nuclear arms race or that could impact negatively on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Ministers reaffirmed their determination to pursue the New Agenda initiative with continued vigour. They agreed that the priority would be to pursue their initiative in the context of the forthcoming NPT review process beginning in 2002. The 2000 NPT undertakings on nuclear disarmament had been given. Implementation of them was now the imperative.

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[1] India, Pakistan, Israel